

BALLADS
AND
POEMS

BALLADS
AND
POEMS

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET
MCMX

TO MY WIFE

NOTE.

I thank the Editors of a Broad Sheet, the *Englishwoman*, the *Nation*, and *Votes for Women*, for permission to reprint five of the poems in this collection.

Contents

	PAGE
The Ballad of Sir Bors	9
Spanish Waters	12
Cargoes	18
Captain Stratton's Fancy	20
An old Song re-sung	23
St. Mary's Bells	25
London Town	27
The Emigrant	31
Port of Holy Peter	33
Beauty	36
The Seekers	37
Prayer	40
Dawn	42
Laugh and be Merry	43
June Twilight	45
Roadways	47
Midsummer Night	49
The Harper's Song	51

CONTENTS

PAGE
The Gentle Lady 53
The Dead Knight 55
Sorrow of Mydath 57
Twilight 59
Invocation 61
Posted as Missing 62
A Creed 64
When Bony Death 67
The West Wind 69
Her Heart 72
Being her Friend 73
Fragments 74
Born for Nought Else 79
Tewkesbury Road 80
The Death Rooms 82
Ignorance 84
Sea Fever 85
The Watch in the Wood 87
C. L. M. 89
Waste. 91
Third Mate. 92
The Wild Duck 94
Imagination 96
Christmas, 1903 98
The Word 100

The Ballad of Sir Bors

Would I could win some quiet and rest, and a
little ease,
In the cool grey hush of the dusk, in the dim
green place of the trees,
Where the birds are singing, singing, singing,
crying aloud
The song of the red, red rose that blossoms
beyond the seas.

Would I could see it, the rose, when the light
begins to fail,
And a lone white star in the West is glimmering
on the mail;

The red, red passionate rose of the sacred blood
    of the Christ,
In the shining chalice of God, the cup of the
    Holy Grail.

The dusk comes gathering grey, and the darkness
    dims the West,
The oxen low to the byre, and all bells ring to
    rest;
But I ride over the moors, for the dusk still
    bides and waits,
That brims my soul with the glow of the rose
    that ends the Quest.

My horse is spavined and ribbed, and his bones
    come through his hide,
My sword is rotten with rust, but I shake the
    reins and ride,

For the bright white birds of God that nest in
 the rose have called,
And never a township now is a town where I
 can bide.

It will happen at last, at dusk, as my horse limps
 down the fell,
A star will glow like a note God strikes on a
 silver bell,
And the bright white birds of God will carry
 my soul to Christ,
And the sight of the Rose, the Rose, will pay
 for the years of hell.

The York Express.

Spanish Waters

Spanish waters, Spanish waters, you are ringing in my ears,
Like a slow sweet piece of music from the grey forgotten years;
Telling tales, and beating tunes, and bringing weary thoughts to me
Of the sandy beach at Muertos, where I would that I could be.

There's a surf breaks on Los Muertos, and it never stops to roar,
And it's there we came to anchor, and it's there we went ashore,

Where the blue lagoon is silent amid snags of
rotting trees,
Dropping like the clothes of corpses cast up by
the seas.

We anchored at Los Muertos when the dipping
sun was red,
We left her half-a-mile to sea, to west of Nigger
Head;
And before the mist was on the Cay, before the
day was done,
We were all ashore on Muertos with the gold that
we had won.

We bore it through the marshes in a half-score
battered chests,
Sinking, in the sucking quagmires to the sunburn
on our breasts,

Heaving over tree-trunks, gasping, damning at the
flies and heat,
Longing for a long drink, out of silver, in the
ship's cool lazareet.

The moon came white and ghostly as we laid
the treasure down,
There was gear there'd make a beggarman as rich
as Lima Town,
Copper charms and silver trinkets from the chests
of Spanish crews,
Gold doubloons and double moydores, louis d'ors
and portagues,

Clumsy yellow-metal earrings from the Indians of
Brazil,
Uncut emeralds out of Rio, bezoar stones from
Guayaquil;

Silver, in the crude and fashioned, pots of old
    Arica bronze,
Jewels from the bones of Incas desecrated by
    the Dons.

We smoothed the place with mattocks, and we
    took and blazed the tree,
Which marks yon where the gear is hid that none
    will ever see,
And we laid aboard the ship again, and south
    away we steers,
Through the loud surf of Los Muertos which
    is beating in my ears.

I'm the last alive that knows it. All the rest have
    gone their ways
Killed, or died, or come to anchor in the old
    Mulatas Cays,

And I go singing, fiddling, old and starved and
in despair,
And I know where all that gold is hid, if I were
only there.

It's not the way to end it all. I'm old, and nearly
blind,
And an old man's past's a strange thing, for it
never leaves his mind.
And I see in dreams, awhiles, the beach, the sun's
disc dipping red,
And the tall ship, under topsails, swaying in past
Nigger Head.

I'd be glad to step ashore there. Glad to take a
pick and go
To the lone blazed coco-palm tree in the place no
others know,

And lift the gold and silver that has mouldered
there for years
By the loud surf of Los Muertos which is beating
in my ears.

Tettenhall.

Cargoes

QUINQUIREME of Nineveh from distant Ophir,
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

CARGOES

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack,
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

Tettenhall.

Captain Stratton's Fancy

Oh some are fond of red wine, and some are fond
of white,
And some are all for dancing by the pale moon-
light;
But rum alone's the tipple, and the heart's delight
Of the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are fond of Spanish wine, and some are
fond of French,
And some'll swallow tay and stuff fit only for a
wench;
But I'm for right Jamaica till I roll beneath the
bench,
Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

CAPTAIN STRATTON'S FANCY

Oh some are for the lily, and some are for the rose,
But I am for the sugar-cane that in Jamaica grows;
For it's that that makes the bonny drink to warm my copper nose,
Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are fond of fiddles, and a song well sung,
And some are all for music for to lilt upon the tongue;
But mouths were made for tankards, and for sucking at the bung,
Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are fond of dancing, and some are fond of dice,
And some are all for red lips, and pretty lasses' eyes;

But a right Jamaica puncheon is a finer prize
  To the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some that's good and godly ones they hold
    that it's a sin
To troll the jolly bowl around, and let the dollars
    spin;
But I'm for toleration and for drinking at an
    inn,
  Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are sad and wretched folk that go in
    silken suits,
And there's a mort of wicked rogues that live in
    good reputes;
So I'm for drinking honestly, and dying in my
    boots,
  Like an old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Coram St.

An old Song re-sung

I SAW a ship a-sailing, a-sailing, a-sailing,
With emeralds and rubies and sapphires in her hold;
And a bosun in a blue coat bawling at the railing
Piping through a silver call that had a chain of gold;
The summer wind was failing and the tall ship rolled.

I saw a ship a-steering, a-steering, a-steering,
With roses in red thread worked upon her sails;
With sacks of purple amethysts, the spoils of buccaneering,

Skins of musky yellow wine, and silks in bales,
Her merry men were cheering, hauling on the brails.

I saw a ship a-sinking, a-sinking, a-sinking,
With glittering sea-water splashing on her decks,
With seamen in her spirit-room singing songs and drinking,
Pulling claret bottles down, and knocking off the necks,
The broken glass was chinking as she sank among the wrecks.

Hyde Park Mansions.

St. Mary's Bells

It's pleasant in Holy Mary
By San Marie lagoon,
The bells they chime and jingle
From dawn to afternoon.
They rhyme and chime and mingle,
They pulse and boom and beat,
And the laughing bells are gentle
And the mournful bells are sweet.

Oh, who are the men that ring them,
The bells of San Marie,
Oh, who but sonsie seamen
Come in from over sea,

ST. MARY'S BELLS

And merrily in the belfries
They rock and sway and hale,
And send the bells a-jangle,
And down the lusty ale.

It's pleasant in Holy Mary
To hear the beaten bells
Come booming into music,
Which throbs, and clangs, and swells,
From sunset till the daybreak,
From dawn to afternoon.
In port of Holy Mary
On San Marie Lagoon.

Coram St.

London Town

OH London Town's a fine town, and London sights are rare,
And London ale is right ale, and brisk's the London air,
And busily goes the world there, but crafty grows the mind,
And London Town of all towns I'm glad to leave behind.

Then hey for croft and hop-yard, and hill, and field, and pond,
With Bredon Hill before me and Malvern Hill beyond.

The hawthorn white i' the hedgerow, and all the
spring's attire
In the comely land of Teme and Lugg, and Clent,
and Clee, and Wyre.

Oh London girls are brave girls, in silk and
cloth o' gold,
And London shops are rare shops, where gallant
things are sold,
And bonnily clinks the gold there, but drowsily
blinks the eye,
And London Town of all towns I'm glad to
hurry by.

Then, hey for covert and woodland, and ash and
elm and oak,
Tewkesbury inns, and Malvern roofs, and Worcester
chimney smoke,

The apple trees in the orchard, the cattle in the
byre,
And all the land from Ludlow town to Bredon
church's spire.

Oh London tunes are new tunes, and London
books are wise,
And London plays are rare plays, and fine to
country eyes,
But craftily fares the knave there, and wickedly
fares the Jew,
And London Town of all towns I'm glad to hurry
through.

So hey for the road, the west road, by mill and
forge and fold,
Scent of the fern and song of the lark by brook,
and field, and wold,

To the comely folk at the hearth-stone and the
talk beside the fire,
In the hearty land, where I was bred, my land of
heart's desire.

Coram St.

The Emigrant

GOING by Daly's shanty I heard the boys within
Dancing the Spanish hornpipe to Driscoll's violin,
I heard the sea-boots shaking the rough planks of the floor,
But I was going westward, I hadn't heart for more.

All down the windy village the noise rang in my ears,
Old sea boots stamping, shuffling, it brought the bitter tears,
The old tune piped and quavered, the lilts came clear and strong,
But I was going westward, I couldn't join the song.

THE EMIGRANT

There were the grey stone houses, the night wind
blowing keen,
The hill-sides pale with moonlight, the young corn
springing green,
The hearth nooks lit and kindly, with dear friends
good to see,
But I was going westward, and the ship waited me.

Coram St.

Port of Holy Peter

THE blue laguna rocks and quivers,
Dull gurgling eddies twist and spin,
The climate does for people's livers,
It's a nasty place to anchor in
Is Spanish port,
Fever port,
Port of Holy Peter.

The town begins on the sea-beaches,
And the town's mad with the stinging flies,
The drinking water's mostly leeches,
It's a far remove from Paradise

PORT OF HOLY PETER

Is Spanish port,
Fever port,
Port of Holy Peter.

There's sand-bagging and throat-slitting,
And quiet graves in the sea slime,
Stabbing, of course, and rum-hitting,
Dirt, and drink, and stink, and crime,
In Spanish port,
Fever port,
Port of Holy Peter.

All the day the wind's blowing
From the sick swamp below the hills,
All the night the plague's growing,
And the dawn brings the fever chills,
In Spanish port,
Fever port,
Port of Holy Peter.

PORT OF HOLY PETER

You get a thirst there's no slaking,
  You get the chills and fever-shakes,
Tongue yellow and head aching,
  And then the sleep that never wakes.

And all the year the heat's baking,
  The sea rots and the earth quakes,
      In Spanish port,
      Fever port,
      Port of Holy Peter.

Tettenhall.

Beauty

I HAVE seen dawn and sunset on moors and
windy hills
Coming in solemn beauty like slow old tunes of
Spain:
I have seen the lady April bringing the daffodils,
Bringing the springing grass and the soft warm
April rain.

I have heard the song of the blossoms and the old
chant of the sea,
And seen strange lands from under the arched
white sails of ships;
But the loveliest things of beauty God ever has
showed to me,
Are her voice, and her hair, and eyes, and the
dear red curve of her lips.

Coram St.

The Seekers

FRIENDS and loves we have none, nor wealth
nor blessed abode,
But the hope of the City of God at the other end
of the road.

Not for us are content, and quiet, and peace of
mind,
For we go seeking a city that we shall never
find.

There is no solace on earth for us—for such as
we—
Who search for a hidden city that we shall
never see.

Only the road and the dawn, the sun, the wind,
and the rain,
And the watch fire under stars, and sleep, and the
road again.

We seek the City of God, and the haunt where
beauty dwells,
And we find the noisy mart and the sound of
burial bells.

Never the golden city, where radiant people
meet,
But the dolorous town where mourners are going
about the street.

We travel the dusty road till the light of the day
is dim,
And sunset shows us spires away on the world's
rim.

THE SEEKERS

We travel from dawn to dusk, till the day is
past and by,
Seeking the Holy City beyond the rim of the
sky.

Friends and loves we have none, nor wealth
nor blest abode,
But the hope of the City of God at the other end
of the road.

Tettenhall.

Prayer

WHEN the last sea is sailed, when the last shallow's
charted,
When the last field is reaped, and the last harvest
stored,
When the last fire is out and the last guest
departed,
Grant the last prayer that I shall pray, be good to
me, O Lord.

And let me pass in a night at sea, a night of storm
and thunder,
In the loud crying of the wind through sail and
rope and spar,

PRAYER

Send me a ninth great peaceful wave to drown and
roll me under
To the cold tunny-fish's home where the drowned
galleons are.

And in the dim green quiet place far out of sight
and hearing,
Grant I may hear at whiles the wash and thresh of
the sea-foam
About the fine keen bows of the stately clippers
steering
Towards the lone northern star and the fair ports
of home.

Tettenhall.

Dawn

THE dawn comes cold: the haystack smokes,
The green twigs crackle in the fire,
The dew is dripping from the oaks,
And sleepy men bear milking-yokes
Slowly towards the cattle-byre.

Down in the town a clock strikes six,
The grey east heaven burns and glows,
The dew shines on the thatch of ricks,
A slow old crone comes gathering sticks,
The red cock in the ox-yard crows.

Beyond the stack where we have lain
The road runs twisted like a snake
(The white road to the land of Spain),
The road that we must foot again,
Though the feet halt and the heart ache.

Coram St.

Laugh and be Merry

LAUGH and be merry, remember, better the world with a song,
Better the world with a blow in the teeth of a wrong.
Laugh, for the time is brief, a thread the length of a span.
Laugh and be proud to belong to the old proud pageant of man.

Laugh and be merry: remember, in olden time,
God made Heaven and Earth for joy He took in a rhyme,
Made them, and filled them full with the strong red wine of His mirth,
The splendid joy of the stars: the joy of the earth.

So we must laugh and drink from the deep blue
cup of the sky
Join the jubilant song of the great stars sweeping by,
Laugh, and battle, and work, and drink of the
wine outpoured
In the dear green earth, the sign of the joy of
the Lord.

Laugh and be merry together, like brothers akin,
Guesting awhile in the rooms of a beautiful inn,
Glad till the dancing stops, and the lilt of the
music ends.
Laugh till the game is played; and be you merry,
my friends.

The Edinburgh Express.

June Twilight

THE twilight comes; the sun
  Dips down and sets,
The boys have done
  Play at the nets.

In a warm golden glow
  The woods are steeped.
The shadows grow;
  The bat has cheeped.

Sweet smells the new-mown hay;
  The mowers pass
Home, each his way,
  Through the grass.

JUNE TWILIGHT

The night-wind stirs the fern,
  A night-jar spins ;
The windows burn
  In the inns.

Dusky it grows. The moon !
  The dews descend.
Love, can this beauty in our hearts
    end?

Henrietta St.

Roadways

ONE road leads to London,
  One road runs to Wales,
My road leads me seawards
  To the white dipping sails.

One road leads to the river,
  As it goes singing slow;
My road leads to shipping,
  Where the bronzed sailors go.

Leads me, lures me, calls me
  To salt green tossing sea;
A road without earth's road-dust
  Is the right road for me.

ROADWAYS

A wet road heaving, shining,
  And wild with seagulls' cries,
A mad salt sea-wind blowing
  The salt spray in my eyes.

My road calls me, lures me
  West, east, south, and north;
Most roads lead men homewards,
  My road leads me forth

To add more miles to the tally
  Of grey miles left behind,
In quest of that one beauty
  God put me here to find.

Tettenhall.

Midsummer Night

THE perfect disc of the sacred moon
  Through still blue heaven serenely swims,
  And the lone bird's liquid music brims
The peace of the night with a perfect tune.

This is that holiest night of the year
  When (the mowers say) may be heard and seen
  The ghostly court of the English queen,
Who rides to harry and hunt the deer.

And the woodland creatures cower awake
  A strange unrest is on harts and does,
  For the maiden Dian a-hunting goes,
And the trembling deer are a-foot in the brake.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT

They start at a shaken leaf: the sound
  Of a dry twig snapped by a squirrel's foot
  Is a nameless dread: and to them the hoot
Of a mousing owl is the cry of a hound.

Oh soon the forest will ring with cries,
  The dim green coverts will flash: the grass
  Will glow as the radiant hunters pass
After the quarry with burning eyes.

The hurrying feet will range unstayed
  Of questing goddess and hunted fawn,
  Till the east is grey with the sacred dawn,
And the red cock wakens the milking maid.

Coram St.

The Harper's Song

THIS sweetness trembling from the strings
The music of my troublous lute
Hath timed Herodias' Daughter's foot;
Setting a-clink her ankle-rings
Whenas she danced to feasted kings.

Where gemmed apparel burned and caught
The sunset 'neath the golden dome,
To the dark beauties of old Rome
My sorrowful lute hath haply brought
Sad memories sweet with tender thought.

When night had fallen and lights and fires
Were darkened in the homes of men,
Some sighing echo stirred :—and then
The old cunning wakened from the wires
The old sorrows and the old desires.

THE HARPER'S SONG

Dead Kings in long forgotten lands,
  And all dead beauteous women; some
  Whose pride imperial hath become
Old armour rusting in the sands
And shards of iron in dusty hands,

Have heard my lyre's soft rise and fall
  Go trembling down the paven ways,
  Till every heart was all ablaze—
Hasty each foot—to obey the call
To triumph or to funeral.

Could I begin again the slow
  Sweet mournful music filled with tears,
  Surely the old, dead, dusty ears
Would hear; the old drowsy eyes would glow,
  Old memories come; old hopes and fears,
And time restore the long ago.

Tettenhall.

The Gentle Lady

So beautiful, so dainty-sweet,
So like a lyre's delightful touch—
A beauty perfect, ripe, complete
That art's own hand could only smutch
And nature's self not better much.

So beautiful, so purely wrought,
Like a fair missal penned with hymns,
So gentle, so surpassing thought—
A beauteous soul in lovely limbs,
A lantern that an angel trims.

THE GENTLE LADY

So simple-sweet, without a sin,
Like gentle music gently timed,
Like rhyme-words coming aptly in,
To round a moonéd poem rhymed
To tunes the laughing bells have chimed.

Coram St.

The Dead Knight

THE cleanly rush of the mountain air,
And the mumbling, grumbling humble-bees,
Are the only things that wander there.
The pitiful bones are laid at ease,
The grass has grown in his tangled hair,
And a rambling bramble binds his knees.

To shrieve his soul from the pangs of hell,
The only requiem bells that rang
Were the harebell and the heather bell.
Hushed he is with the holy spell
In the gentle hymn the wind sang,
And he lies quiet, and sleeps well.

THE DEAD KNIGHT

He is bleached and blanched with the summer sun;
The misty rain and the cold dew
Have altered him from the kingly one
Whom his lady loved, and his men knew,
And dwindled him to a skeleton.

The vetches have twined about his bones,
The straggling ivy twists and creeps
In his eye-sockets : the nettle keeps
Vigil about him while he sleeps.
Over his body the wind moans
With a dreary tune throughout the day,
In a chorus wistful, eerie, thin
As the gulls' cry, as the cry in the bay,
The mournful word the seas say
When tides are wandering out or in.

Compton.

Sorrow of Mydath

WEARY the cry of the wind is, weary the sea,
Weary the heart and the mind and the body of me,
Would I were out of it, done with it, would I could be
A white gull crying along the desolate sands.

Outcast, derelict soul in a body accurst,
Standing drenched with the spindrift, standing athirst,
For the cool green waves of death to arise and burst
In a tide of quiet for me on the desolate sands.

SORROW OF MYDATH

Would that the waves and the long white hair of
the spray
Would gather in splendid terror, and blot me away
To the sunless place of the wrecks where the
waters sway
Gently, dreamily, quietly over desolate sands.

Coram St.

Twilight

TWILIGHT it is, and the far woods are dim, and
the rooks cry and call.
Down in the valley the lamps, and the mist, and a
star over all,
There by the rick, where they thresh, is the drone
at an end,
Twilight it is, and I travel the road with my
friend.

I think of the friends who are dead, who were dear
long ago in the past,
Beautiful friends who are dead, though I know that
death cannot last;

Friends with the beautiful eyes that the dust has
defiled,
Beautiful souls who were gentle when I was a
child.

Gt. Comberton.

Invocation

O WANDERER into many brains,
O spark the emperor's purple hides,
You sow the dusk with fiery grains
When the gold horseman rides.
   O beauty on the darkness hurled,
   Be it through me you shame the world.

Posted as Missing

UNDER all her topsails she trembled like a stag,
The wind made a ripple in her bonny red flag;
They cheered her from the shore and they cheered
her from the pier,
And under all her topsails she trembled like a
deer.

So she passed swaying, where the green seas run,
Her wind-steadied topsails were stately in the
sun;
There was glitter on the water from her red port
light,
So she passed swaying, till she was out of sight.

Long and long ago it was, a weary time it is,
The bones of her sailor-men are coral plants by
this;

POSTED AS MISSING.

Coral plants, and shark-weed, and a mermaid's
comb,
And if the fishers net them they never bring them
home.

It's rough on sailors' women. They have to
mangle hard,
And stitch at dungarees till their finger-ends are
scarred,
Thinking of the sailor-men who sang among the
crowd,
Hoisting of her topsails when she sailed so proud.

Greenwich.

A Creed

I HOLD that when a person dies
His soul returns again to earth ;
Arrayed in some new flesh-disguise
Another mother gives him birth.
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain
The old soul takes the roads again.

Such is my own belief and trust ;
This hand, this hand that holds the pen,
Has many a hundred times been dust
And turned, as dust, to dust again ;
These eyes of mine have blinked and shone
In Thebes, in Troy, in Babylon.

A CREED

All that I rightly think or do,
  Or make, or spoil, or bless, or blast,
Is curse or blessing justly due
  For sloth or effort in the past.
My life's a statement of the sum
Of vice indulged, or overcome.

I know that in my lives to be
  My sorry heart will ache and burn,
And worship, unavailingly,
  The woman whom I used to spurn,
And shake to see another have
The love I spurned, the love she gave.

And I shall know, in angry words,
  In gibes, and mocks, and many a tear,
A carrion flock of homing-birds,
  The gibes and scorns I uttered here.
The brave word that I failed to speak
Will brand me dastard on the cheek.

A CREED

And as I wander on the roads
  I shall be helped and healed and blessed;
Dear words shall cheer and be as goads
  To urge to heights before unguessed.
My road shall be the road I made;
All that I gave shall be repaid.

So shall I fight, so shall I tread,
  In this long war beneath the stars;
So shall a glory wreathe my head,
  So shall I faint and show the scars,
Until this case, this clogging mould,
Be smithied all to kingly gold.

Greenwich.

When Bony Death

WHEN bony Death has chilled her gentle blood,
  And dimmed the brightness of her wistful eyes,
And changed her glorious beauty into mud
  By his old skill in hateful wizardries;

When an old lichened marble strives to tell
  How sweet a grace, how red a lip was hers;
When rheumy grey-beards say, "I knew her well,"
  Showing the grave to curious worshippers;

WHEN BONY DEATH

When all the roses that she sowed in me
  Have dripped their crimson petals and decayed,
Leaving no greenery on any tree
  That her dear hands in my heart's garden laid,

Then grant, old Time, to my green mouldering skull,
These songs may keep her memory beautiful.

Coram St.

The West Wind

It's a warm wind, the west wind, full of birds'
cries;
I never hear the west wind but tears are in my
eyes.
For it comes from the west lands, the old brown
hills,
And April's in the west wind, and daffodils.

It's a fine land, the west land, for hearts as tired
as mine,
Apple orchards blossom there, and the air's like
wine.
There is cool green grass there, where men may
lie at rest,
And the thrushes are in song there, fluting from
the nest.

"Will you not come home, brother? You have
been long away.
It's April, and blossom time, and white is the
spray:
And bright is the sun, brother, and warm is the
rain,
Will you not come home, brother, home to us
again?

The young corn is green, brother, where the
rabbits run;
It's blue sky, and white clouds, and warm rain
and sun.
It's song to a man's soul, brother, fire to a man's
brain,
To hear the wild bees and see the merry spring
again.

THE WEST WIND

Larks are singing in the west, brother, above the green wheat,
So will you not come home, brother, and rest your tired feet?
I've a balm for bruised hearts, brother, sleep for aching eyes,"
Says the warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries.

It's the white road westwards is the road I must tread
To the green grass, the cool grass, and rest for heart and head,
To the violets and the brown brooks and the thrushes' song
In the fine land, the west land, the land where I belong.

Coram St.

Her Heart

HER heart is always doing lovely things,
Filling my wintry mind with simple flowers;
Playing sweet tunes on my untunèd strings,
Delighting all my undelightful hours.

She plays me like a lute, what tune she will,
No string in me but trembles at her touch,
Shakes into sacred music, or is still,
Trembles or stops, or swells, her skill is such.

And in the dusty tavern of my soul
Where filthy lusts drink witches' brew for wine,
Her gentle hand still keeps me from the bowl,
Still keeps me man, saves me from being swine.

All grace in me, all sweetness is my verse,
Is hers, is my dear girl's, and only hers.

Coram St.

Being her Friend

Being her friend, I do not care, not I,
  How gods or men may wrong me, beat me down;
Her word's sufficient star to travel by,
  I count her quiet praise sufficient crown.

Being her friend, I do not covet gold,
  Save for a royal gift to give her pleasure;
To sit with her, and have her hand to hold,
  Is wealth, I think, surpassing minted treasure.

Being her friend, I only covet art,
  A white pure flame to search me as I trace
In crooked letters from a throbbing heart,
  The hymn to beauty written on her face.

Coram St.

Fragments

TROY TOWN is covered up with weeds,
  The rabbits and the pismires brood
On broken gold, and shards, and beads
  Where Priam's ancient palace stood.

The floors of many a gallant house
  Are matted with the roots of grass;
The glow-worm and the nimble mouse
  Among her ruins flit and pass.

And there, in orts of blackened bone,
  The widowed Trojan beauties lie,
And Simois babbles over stone
  And waps and gurgles to the sky.

FRAGMENTS

Once there were merry days in Troy,
  Her chimneys smoked with cooking meals,
The passing chariots did annoy
  The sunning housewives at their wheels.

And many a lovely Trojan maid
  Set Trojan lads to lovely things;
The game of life was nobly played,
  They played the game like Queens and
      Kings.

So that, when Troy had greatly passed
  In one red roaring fiery coal,
The courts the Grecians overcast
  Became a city in the soul.

In some green island of the sea,
  Where now the shadowy coral grows
In pride and pomp and empery
  The courts of old Atlantis rose.

FRAGMENTS

In many a glittering house of glass
  The Atlanteans wandered there;
The paleness of their faces was
  Like ivory, so pale they were.

And hushed they were, no noise of words
  In those bright cities ever rang;
Only their thoughts, like golden birds,
  About their chambers thrilled and sang.

They knew all wisdom, for they knew
  The souls of those Egyptian Kings
Who learned, in ancient Babilu,
  The beauty of immortal things.

They knew all beauty—when they thought
  The air chimed like a stricken lyre,
The elemental birds were wrought,
  The golden birds became a fire.

FRAGMENTS

And straight to busy camps and marts
  The singing flames were swiftly gone;
The trembling leaves of human hearts
  Hid boughs for them to perch upon.

And men in desert places, men
  Abandoned, broken, sick with fears,
Rose singing, swung their swords agen,
  And laughed and died among the spears.

The green and greedy seas have drowned
  That city's glittering walls and towers,
Her sunken minarets are crowned
  With red and russet water-flowers.

In towers and rooms and golden courts
  The shadowy coral lifts her sprays;
The scrawl hath gorged her broken orts,
  The shark doth haunt her hidden ways.

FRAGMENTS

But, at the falling of the tide,
  The golden birds still sing and gleam,
The Atlanteans have not died,
  Immortal things still give us dream.

The dream that fires man's heart to make,
  To build, to do, to sing or say
A beauty Death can never take,
  An Adam from the crumbled clay.

Greenwich.

Born for Nought Else

BORN for nought else, for nothing but for this,
  To watch the soft blood throbbing in her throat,
To think how comely sweet her body is,
  And learn the poem of her face by rote.

Born for nought else but to attempt a rhyme
  That shall describe her womanhood aright,
And make her holy to the end of Time,
  And be my soul's acquittal in God's sight.

Born for nought else but to expressly mark
  The music of her dear delicious ways ;
Born but to perish meanly in the dark,
  Yet born to be the man to sing her praise.

Born for nought else : there is a spirit tells
My lot's a King's, being born for nothing else.

Coram St.

Tewkesbury Road

It is good to be out on the road, and going one knows not where,
 Going through meadow and village, one knows not whither nor why;
Through the grey light drift of the dust, in the keen cool rush of the air,
 Under the flying white clouds, and the broad blue lift of the sky.

And to halt at the chattering brook, in the tall green fern at the brink
 Where the harebell grows, and the gorse, and the foxgloves purple and white;
Where the shy-eyed delicate deer come down in a troop to drink
 When the stars are mellow and large at the coming on of the night.

O, to feel the beat of the rain, and the homely
smell of the earth,
Is a tune for the blood to jig to, a joy past
power of words;
And the blessed green comely meadows are all
a-ripple with mirth
At the noise of the lambs at play and the dear
wild cry of the birds.

The Wergs.

The Death Rooms

My soul has many an old decaying room
   Hung with the ragged arras of the past,
Where startled faces flicker in the gloom,
   And horrid whispers set the cheek aghast.

Those dropping rooms are haunted by a death,
   A something like a worm gnawing a brain,
That bids me heed what bitter lesson saith,
   The blind wind beating on the window-pane.

THE DEATH ROOMS

None dwells in those old rooms: none ever can—
  I pass them through at night with hidden head;
Lock'd rotting rooms her eyes must never scan,
  Floors that her blessed feet must never tread.

Haunted old rooms: rooms she must never know,
Where death-ticks knock and mouldering panels
    glow.

Coram St.

Ignorance

Since I have learned Love's shining alphabet,
  And spelled in ink what's writ in me in flame,
And borne her sacred image richly set
  Here in my heart to keep me quit of shame;

Since I have learned how wise and passing wise
  Is the dear friend whose beauty I extol,
And know how sweet a soul looks through the eyes,
  That are so pure a window to her soul;

Since I have learned how rare a woman shows
  As much in all she does as in her looks,
And seen the beauty of her shame the rose,
  And dim the beauty writ about in books;

All I have learned, and can learn, shows me this—
How scant, how slight, my knowledge of her is.

Coram St.

Sea Fever

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;

And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds
flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the
sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant
gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the
wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing
fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long
trick's over.

Coram St.

The Watch in the Wood

WHEN Death has laid her in his quietude,
  And dimmed the glow of her benignant star,
Her tired limbs shall rest within a wood,
  In a green glade where oaks and beeches are,

Where the shy fawns, the pretty fawns, the deer,
  With mild brown eyes shall view her spirit's husk;
The sleeping woman of her will appear,
  The maiden Dian shining through the dusk.

And, when the stars are white as twilight fails,
  And the green leaves are hushed, and the winds
    swoon,
The calm pure thrilling throats of nightingales
  Shall hymn her sleeping beauty to the moon.

All the woods hushed—save for a dripping rose,
All the woods dim—save where a glow-worm glows.

THE WATCH IN THE WOOD

Brimming the quiet woods with holiness,
  The lone brown birds will hymn her till the dawn,
The delicate, shy, dappled deer will press
  Soft pitying muzzles on her swathèd lawn.

The little pretty rabbits running by,
  Will pause among the dewy grass to peep,
Their thudding hearts affrighted to espy
  The maiden Dian lying there asleep.

Brown, lustrous, placid eyes of sylvan things
  Will wonder at the quiet in her face,
While from the thorny branch the singer brings
  Beauty and peace to that immortal place.

Until the grey dawn sets the woods astir
The pure birds' thrilling psalm will mourn for her.

Coram St.

C. L. M.

In the dark womb where I began
My mother's life made me a man.
Through all the months of human birth
Her beauty fed my common earth.
I cannot see, nor breathe, nor stir,
But through the death of some of her.

Down in the darkness of the grave
She cannot see the life she gave.
For all her love, she cannot tell
Whether I use it ill or well,
Nor knock at dusty doors to find
Her beauty dusty in the mind.

If the grave's gates could be undone,
She would not know her little son,

C. L. M.

I am so grown. If we should meet
She would pass by me in the street,
Unless my soul's face let her see
My sense of what she did for me.

What have I done to keep in mind
My debt to her and womankind?
What woman's happier life repays
Her for those months of wretched days?
For all my mouthless body leeched
Ere Birth's releasing hell was reached?

What have I done, or tried, or said
In thanks to that dear woman dead?
Men triumph over women still,
Men trample women's rights at will,
And man's lust roves the world untamed.

* * * *

O grave, keep shut lest I be shamed.

Maida Hill.

Waste

No rose but fades: no glory but must pass:
No hue but dims: no precious silk but frets.
Her beauty must go underneath the grass,
Under the long roots of the violets.

O, many glowing beauties Time has hid
In that dark, blotting box the villain sends.
He covers over with a coffin-lid
Mothers and sons, and foes and lovely friends.

Maids that were redly-lipped and comely-skinned,
Friends that deserved a sweeter bed than clay,
All are as blossoms blowing down the wind,
Things the old envious villain sweeps away.

And though the mutterer laughs and church bells toll,
Death brings another April to the soul.

Coram St.

Third Mate

All the sheets are clacking, all the blocks are
whining,
The sails are frozen stiff and the wetted decks are
shining;
The reef's in the topsails, and its coming on to
blow,
And I think of the dear girl I left long ago.

Grey were her eyes, and her hair was long and
bonny,
Golden was her hair, like the wild bees' honey.
And I was but a dog, and a mad one to despise,
The gold of her hair and the grey of her eyes.

THIRD MATE

There's the sea before me, and my home's behind
    me,
And beyond there the strange lands where nobody
    will mind me,
No one but the girls with the paint upon their
    cheeks,
Who sell away their beauty to whomsoever seeks.

There'll be drink and women there, and songs and
    laughter,
Peace from what is past and from all that follows
    after ;
And a fellow will forget how a woman lies awake,
Lonely in the night watch crying for his sake.

Black it blows and bad and it howls like slaughter,
And the ship she shudders as she takes the water.
Hissing flies the spindrift like a wind-blown smoke,
And I think of a woman and a heart I broke.

Greenwich.

The Wild Duck

TWILIGHT. Red in the west.
Dimness. A glow on the wood.
The teams plod home to rest.
The wild duck come to glean.
O souls not understood,
What a wild cry in the pool;
What things have the farm ducks seen
That they cry so—huddle and cry?

Only the soul that goes.
Eager. Eager. Flying.
Over the globe of the moon,
Over the wood that glows.

THE WILD DUCK

Wings linked. Necks a-strain,
A rush and a wild crying.

*   *   *   *

A cry of the long pain
In the reeds of a steel lagoon,
In a land that no man knows.

Hampden.

Imagination

WOMAN, beauty, wonder, sacred woman,
Spirit moulding man from brute to human,
All the beauty seen by all the wise
Is but body to the soul seen by your eyes.

Woman, if my quickened soul could win you,
Nestle to the living soul within you,
Breathe the very breathing of your spirit,
Tremble with you at the things which stir it,

Be you, while your swifter nerves divine
Wisdom from the touch unfelt by mine,
Pass within the beauty to the brain,
Learn the heroism from the pain,

IMAGINATION

I should know the blinding, quick intense,
Lightning of the soul's spring from the sense,
Touch the very gleam of life's division.
Earth should learn a new soul from the vision.

Hampden.

Christmas, 1903

O, THE sea breeze will be steady, and the tall ship's
going trim,
And the dark blue skies are paling, and the white
stars burning dim;
The long night watch is over, and the long sea-
roving done,
And yonder light is the Start Point light, and
yonder comes the sun.

O, we have been with the Spaniards, and far and
long on the sea;
But there are the twisted chimneys, and the gnarled
old inns on the quay.
The wind blows keen as the day breaks, the roofs
are white with the rime,
And the church-bells ring as the sun comes up to
call men in to Prime.

CHRISTMAS, 1903

The church-bells rock and jangle, and there is
peace on the earth.
Peace and good will and plenty and Christmas
games and mirth.
O, the gold glints bright on the wind-vane as it
shifts above the squire's house,
And the water of the bar of Salcombe is muttering
about the bows.

O, the salt sea tide of Salcombe, it wrinkles into
wisps of foam,
And the church-bells ring in Salcombe to ring poor
sailors home.
The belfry rocks as the bells ring, the chimes are
merry as a song,
They ring home wandering sailors who have been
homeless long.

Cashlauna Shelmiddy.

The Word

My friend, my bonny friend, when we are old,
  And hand in hand go tottering down the hill,
May we be rich in love's refinèd gold,
  May love's gold coin be current with us still.

May love be sweeter for the vanished days,
  And your most perfect beauty still as dear
As when your troubled singer stood at gaze
  In the dear March of a most sacred year.

May what we are be all we might have been,
  And that potential, perfect, O my friend,
And may there still be many sheafs to glean
  In our love's acre, comrade, till the end.

And may we find when ended is the page
Death but a tavern on our pilgrimage.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED.

BOOKS BY JOHN MASEFIELD

Published by ELKIN MATHEWS

Royal 16mo. (uniform with "Ballads and Poems"). 1s. *net.*

BALLADS.

A volume consisting of the first 63 pages of this collection.

Fcap. 8vo. Wrapper, 1s. *net; Cloth,* 1s. 6*d. net.*

A MAINSAIL HAUL (NAUTICAL YARNS).

With Frontispiece by JACK B. YEATS.

"Mr. Masefield has the true spirit of the ancient childhood of the earth. He has the real spirit of the poets, and he has it precisely in that particular in which the poets and the tellers of fairy tales most seriously and most decisively differ from the realists of our own day. Mr. Masefield tells a story that is in itself strange, or splendid, or even supernatural, but tells it in the common, graphic language of life."—Mr. G. K. CHESTERTON, in *Daily News.*

Fcap. 8vo. Wrapper, 1s. *net; Cloth,* 1s. 6*d. net.*

THE FANCY.

A Selection from the Poetical Remains of the late PETER CORCORAN (*i.e.*, JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS, the friend of JOHN KEATS). A verbatim Reprint, with Prefatory Memoir by JOHN MASEFIELD, and 13 Illustrations by JACK B. YEATS.

"Humorous, and full of a mischievous topical fun . . . delightfully illustrated by Mr. Jack Yeats."—*Manchester Guardian.*

LONDON: ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET, W.